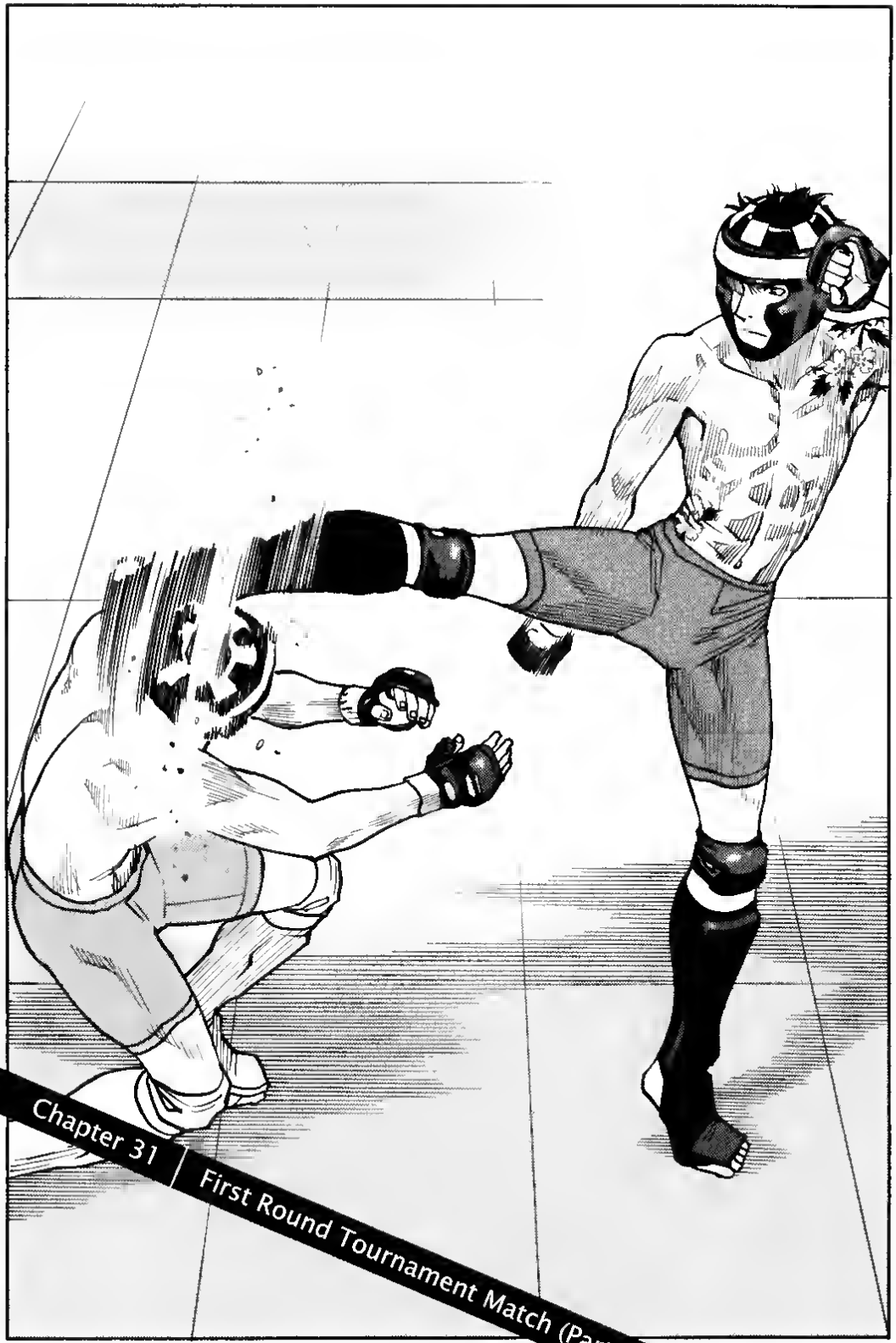
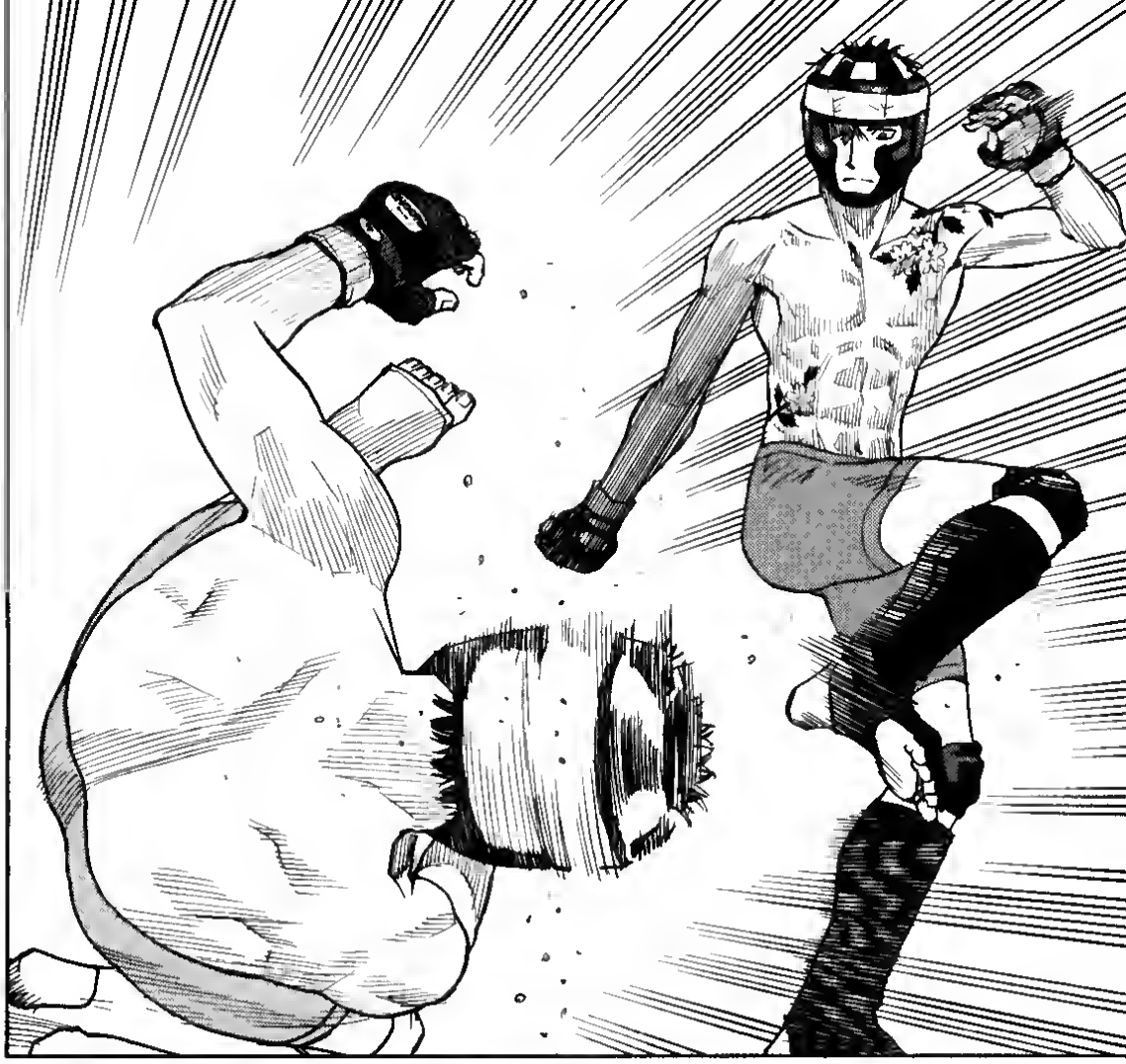
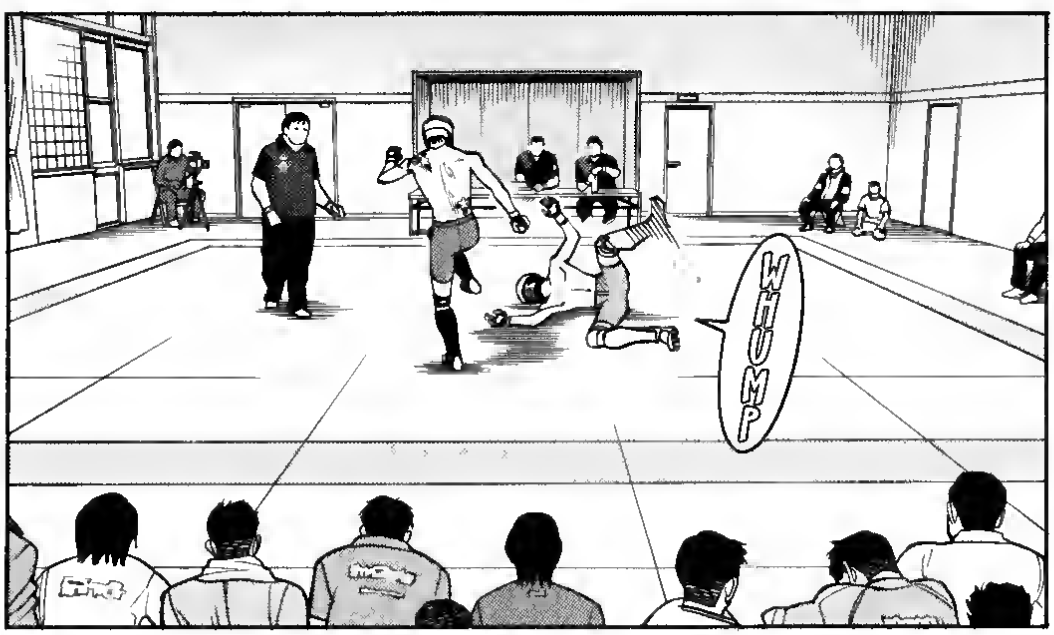
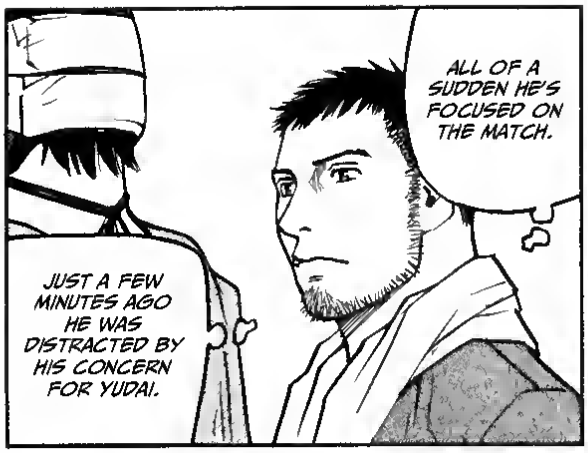


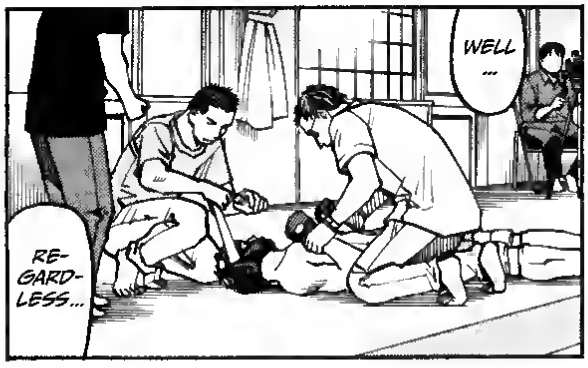
Chapter 31 | First Round Tournament Match (Part 2)

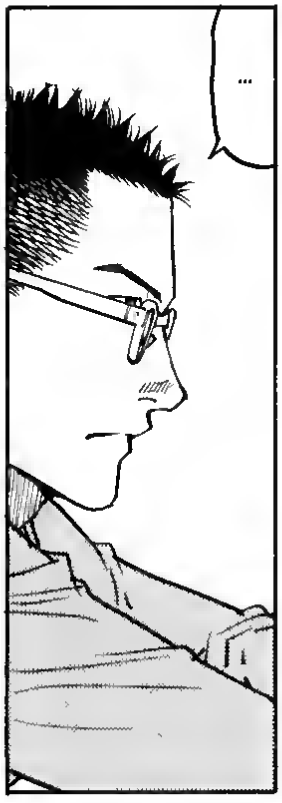



WHUMP

Match over!
...BUT HE WON THE SAME WAY HE ALWAYS DOES, BY KNOCKING HIS OPPONENT OUT.
AT FIRST I THOUGHT MAYBE HE WAS IN A PINCH...
!


ALL OF A SUDDEN HE'S FOCUSED ON THE MATCH.
JUST A FEW MINUTES AGO HE WAS DISTRACTED BY HIS CONCERN FOR YUDAI.


WELL ...
RE-GARD-LESS...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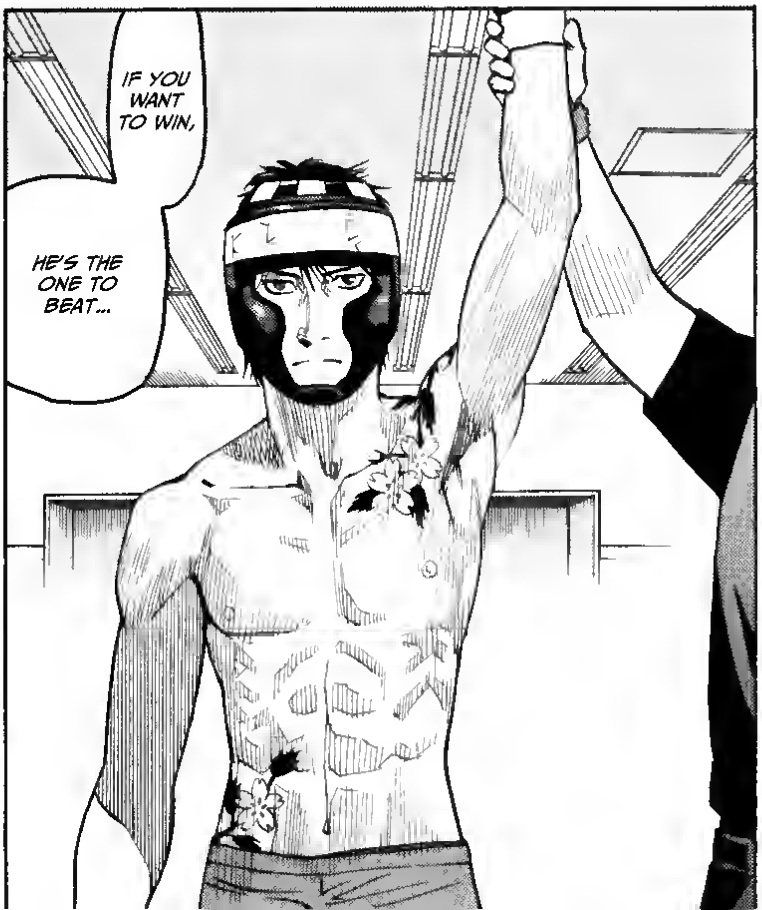
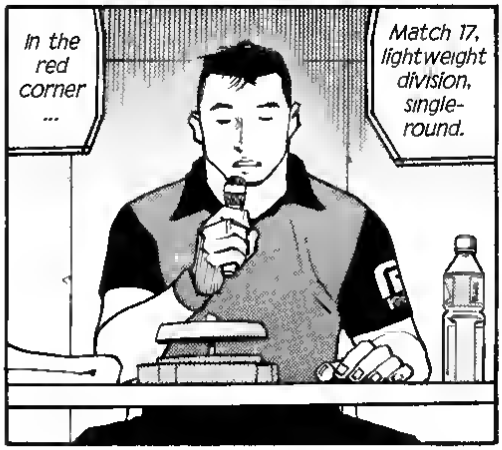

IF YOU WANT TO WIN,
HE'S THE ONE TO BEAT...

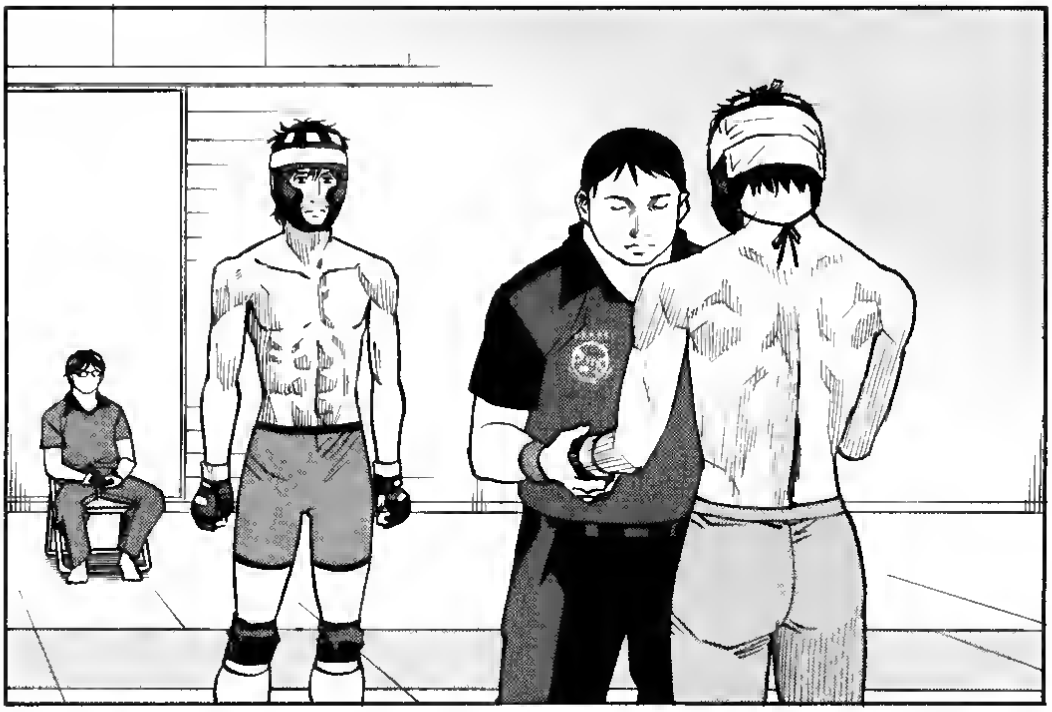
MEGURU, THAT'S YOUR OPPO-NENT.
YEAH.
HE'S A FAST STRIKER WHO'LL TRY TO OUT-BOX YOU.

WATCH OUT FOR HIS COUN-TERS.
GOT IT.
HE'S GONNA KEEP HIS DISTANCE, SO YOU'RE GONNA HAVE TO COME AT HIM AND TAKE HIM DOWN YOURSELF.

HE'S NEVER WON BY KO, BUT HE'S THE TYPE TO RACK UP POINTS WITH A STRONG DEFENSE COMBINED WITH HIS JABS AND COUNTERS.
HE HAS SOME TROUBLE WITH GRAPPLING AND WAS SUBMITTED TWICE.


In the red corner ...
Match 17, lightweight division, single-round.

...Shigeru Omaeda!
...with Y's Factory...
GET IN THE RING!
...Meguru Takayanagi!
And in the blue corner with Fighters Brew...

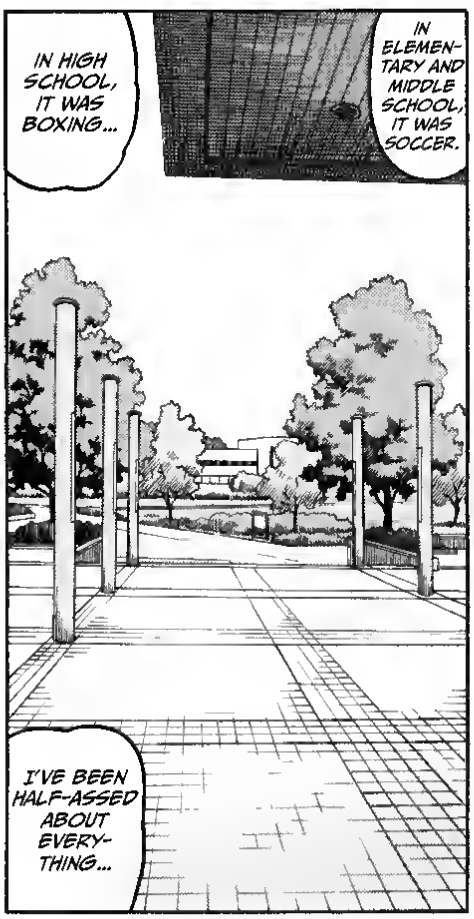


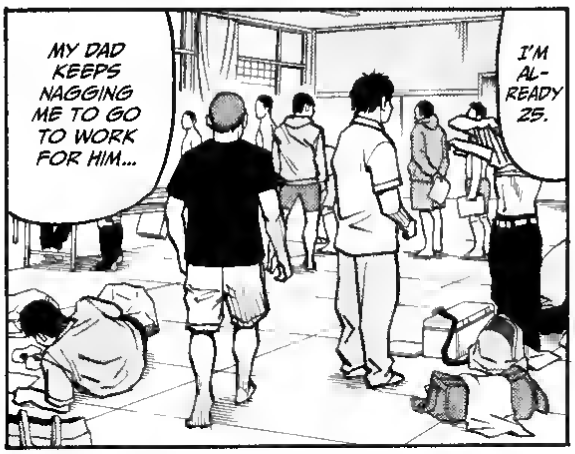
OSAKI FAILED HIS WEIGH-IN?!
WHAT?

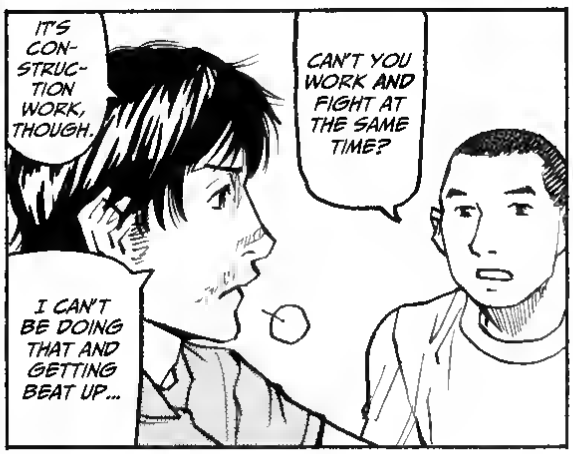
HE AND I ARE 1-1...
PROBABLY OVERDID IT ON THE WEIGHT TRAINING, RIGHT?
...SO I'D BEEN PRACTICING MY GRAPPLING.

I'VE GOTTA WIN THIS THING AND GO PRO THIS YEAR...
IN ANY CASE ...

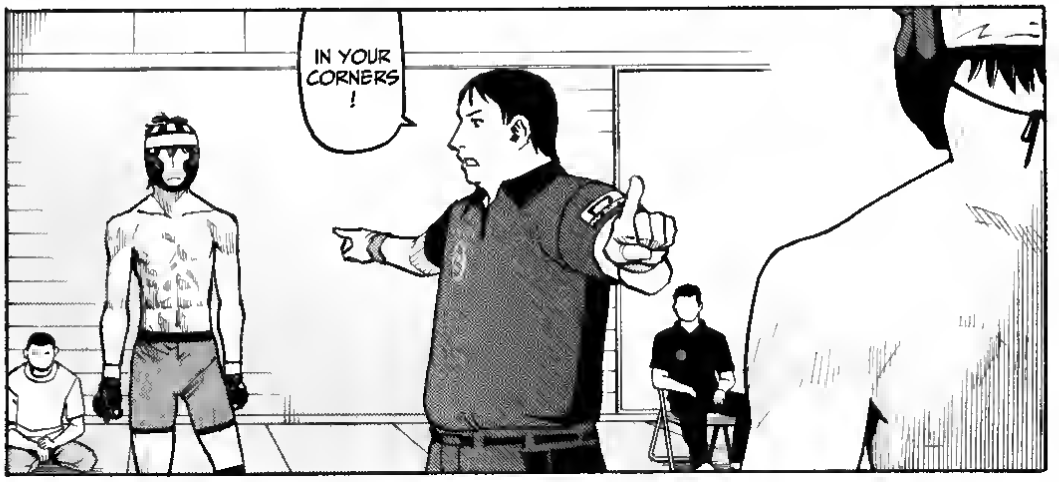
WHAT KIND OF FIGHTER IS THIS MEGURU TAKAYANAGI GUY?
HE'S ONLY BEEN IN FOUR FIGHTS, BUT HE MANAGED TO SUBMIT OGASAWARA IN A GRAPPLING MATCH.
HE CAN BE DANGEROUS ON THE GROUND, SO WATCH OUT.

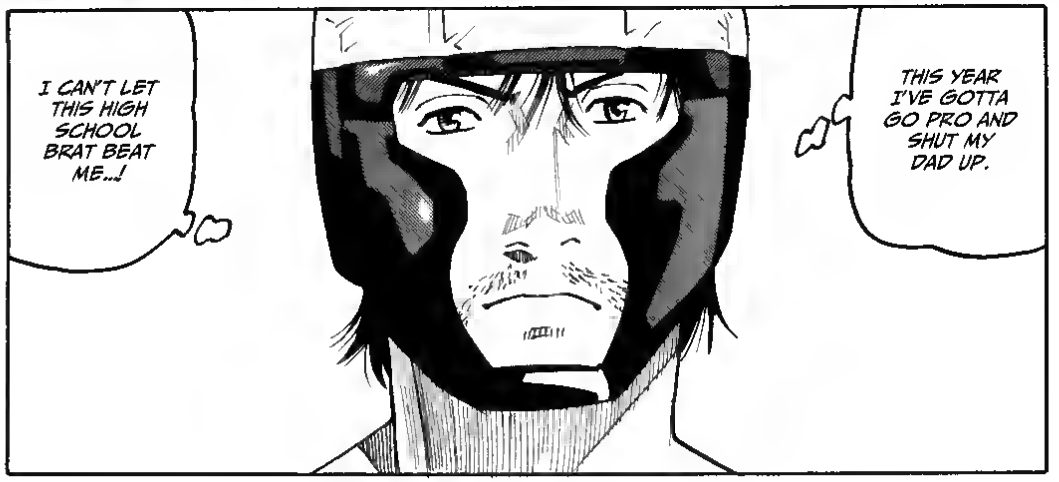

IN HIGH SCHOOL, IT WAS BOXING...
IN ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOL, IT WAS SOCCER.
I'VE BEEN HALF-ASSED ABOUT EVERYTHING...


MY DAD KEEPS NAGGING ME TO GO TO WORK FOR HIM...
I'M ALREADY 25.

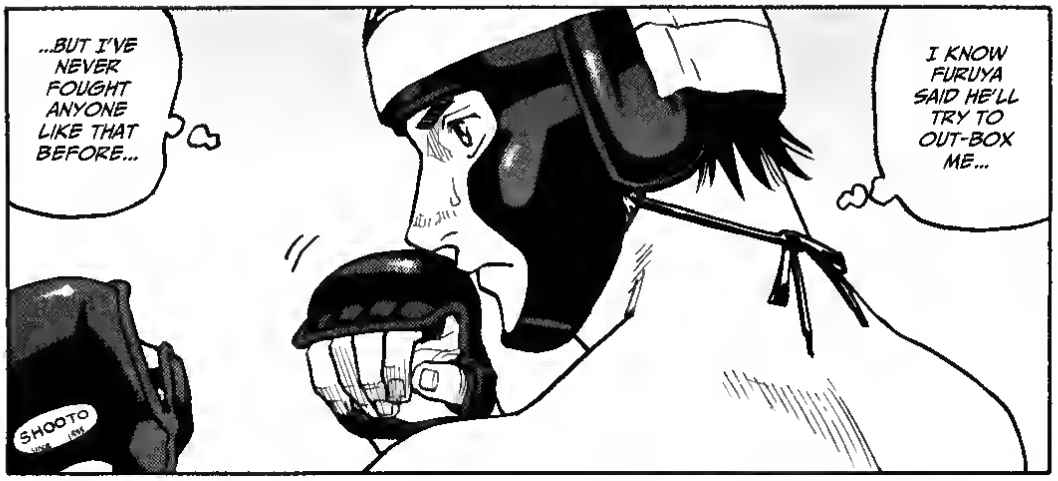

IT'S CONSTRUCTION WORK, THOUGH.
CAN'T YOU WORK AND FIGHT AT THE SAME TIME?
I CAN'T BE DOING THAT AND GETTING BEAT UP...

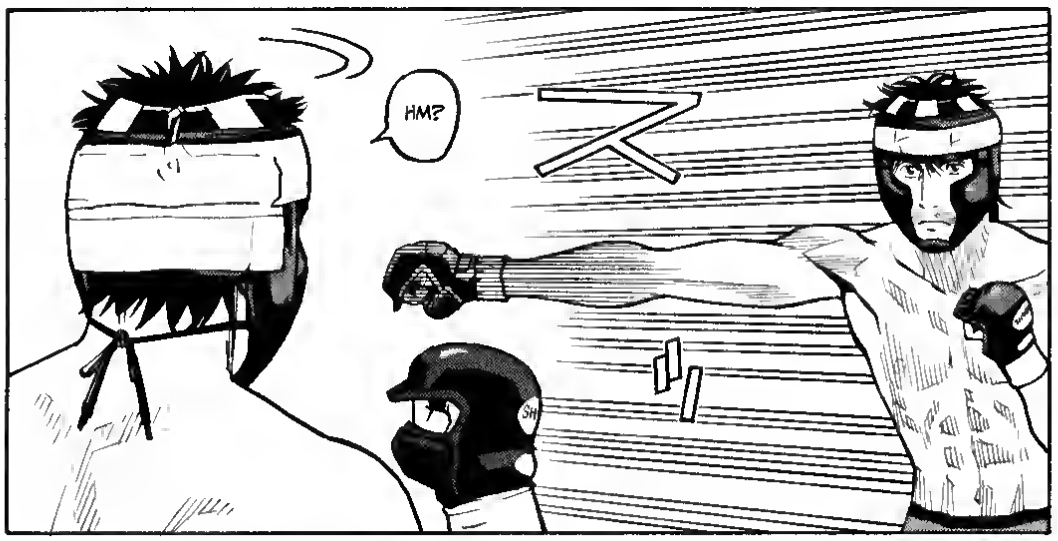
AT LEAST WITH SHOOTO ...
...I WANT TO LEAVE MY MARK SOMEHOW.

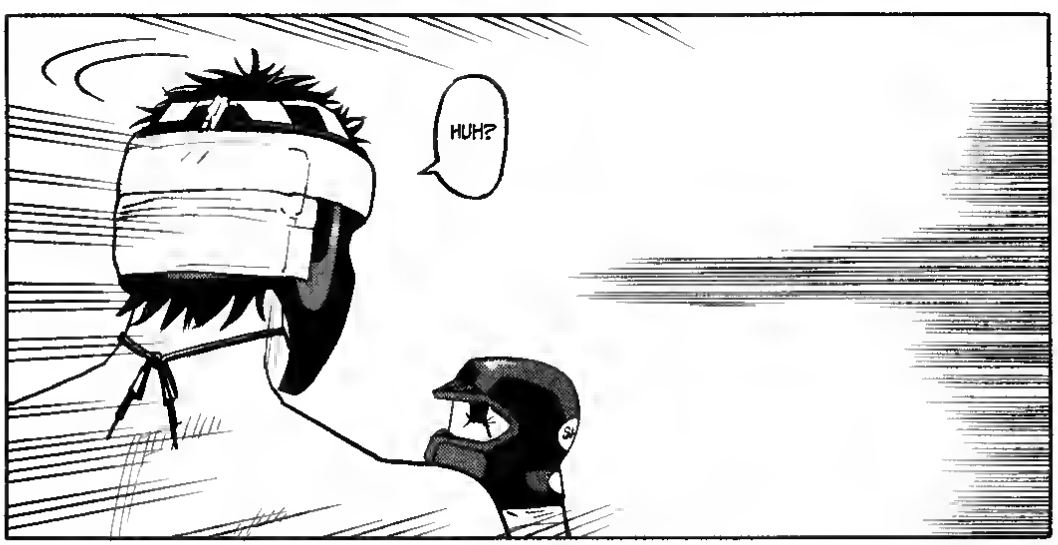

IN YOUR CORNERS !


I CAN'T LET THIS HIGH SCHOOL BRAT BEAT ME...!
THIS YEAR I'VE GOTTA GO PRO AND SHUT MY DAD UP.

HUFF
!
MEGU-RU!
TAKE A DEEP BREATH!
HA A A
FIGHT!


...BUT I'VE NEVER FOUGHT ANYONE LIKE THAT BEFORE...
I KNOW FURUYA SAID HE'LL TRY TO OUT-BOX ME...
SHOOTO

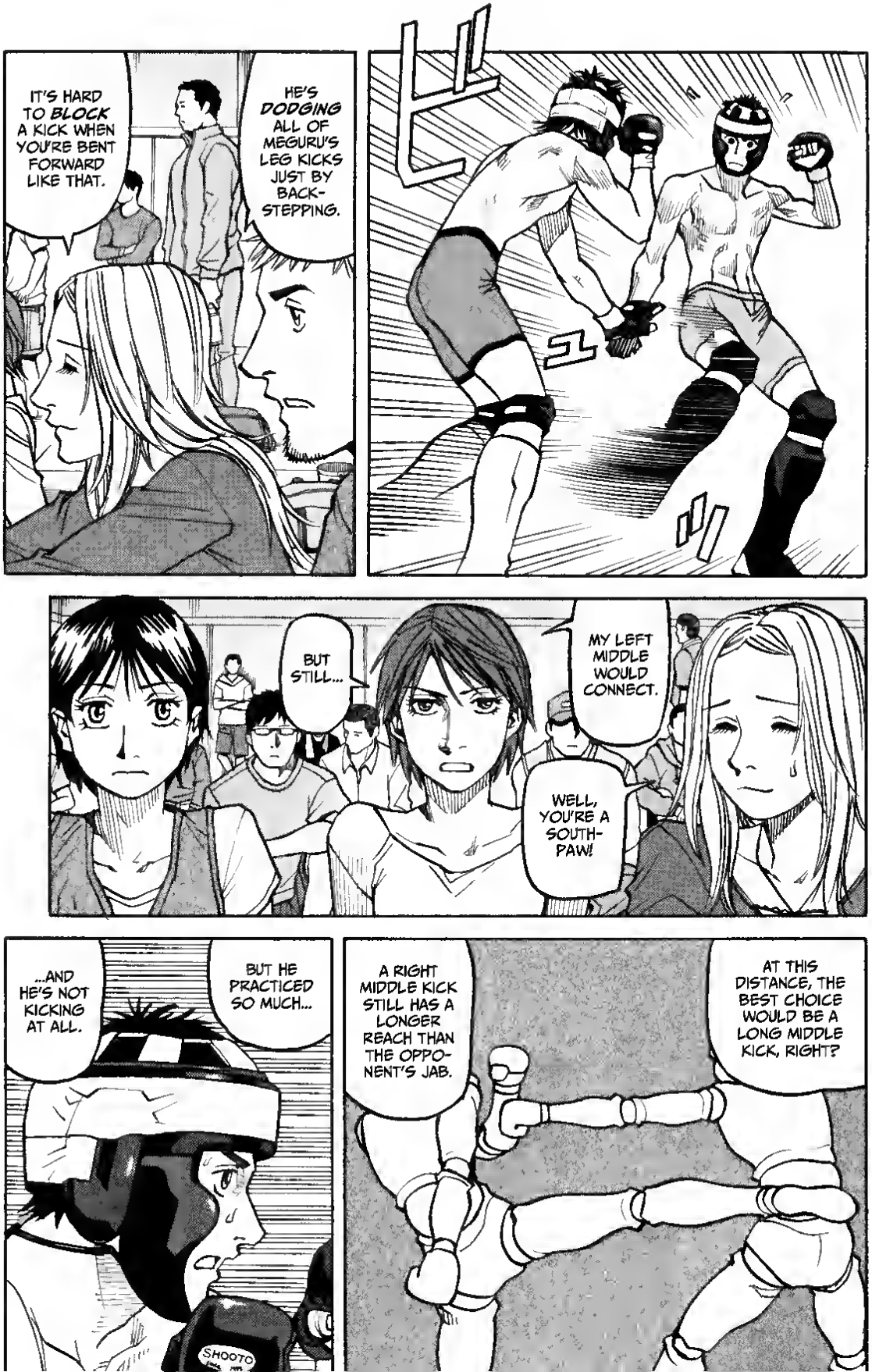

HM?


HUH?

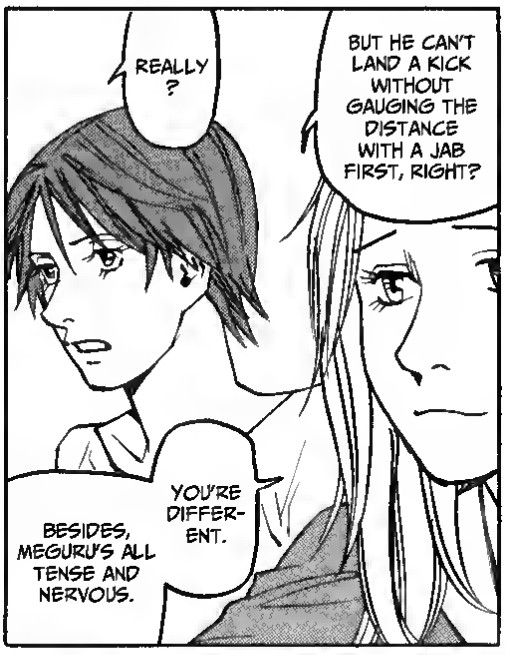
AGK!
SHOOT
WAIT!
HUH?
WHA
?

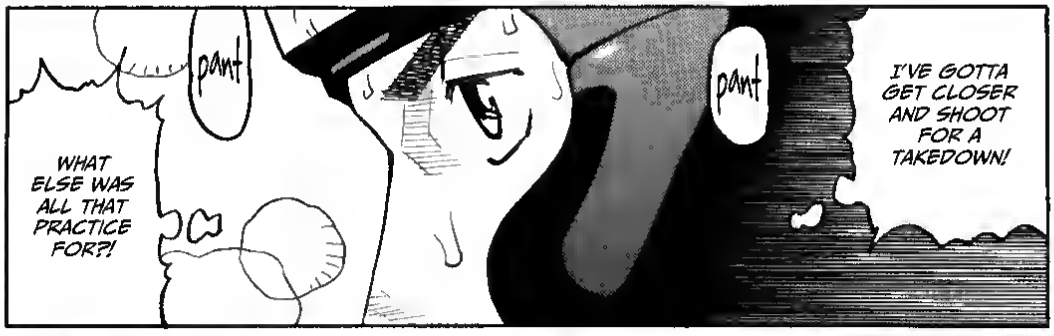
UGH!
AHH!
HE'S GONE!
SWISH
!
MEGURU! BACK-STEP!
WATCH HIS WHOLE BODY!

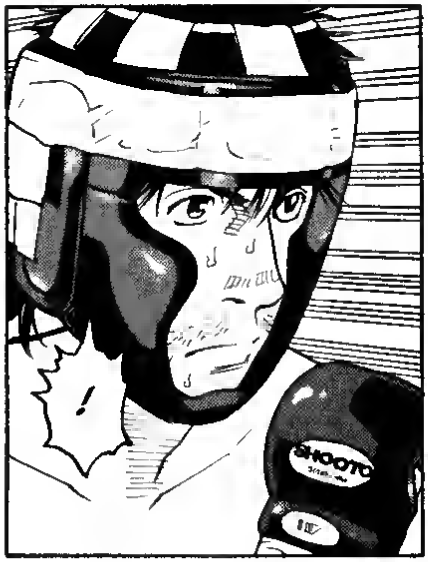
I'VE GOT TO GET OUT THERE...
THE MINUTE I LOWER MY GUARD, HE COMES AFTER ME.
WAH!
WAH!
WAH!
ビュッ!!
ビュッ!!
THIS TIME HE WENT AROUND TO THE LEFT!
AHH!
HIS STYLE IS PUNCH-FOCUSED, THOUGH...
MEGURU JUST CAN'T KEEP UP WITH THAT GUY'S SPEED AND FOOTWORK...

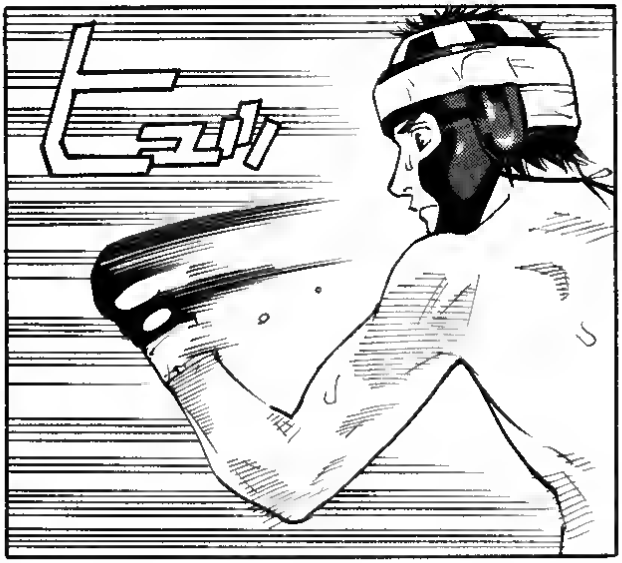

IT'S HARD TO BLOCK A KICK WHEN YOU'RE BENT FORWARD LIKE THAT.
HE'S DODGING ALL OF MEGURU'S LEG KICKS JUST BY BACK-STEPPING.
BUT STILL...
MY LEFT MIDDLE WOULD CONNECT.
WELL, YOU'RE A SOUTH-PAW!
...AND HE'S NOT KICKING AT ALL.
BUT HE PRACTICED SO MUCH...
SHOOTO
A RIGHT MIDDLE KICK STILL HAS A LONGER REACH THAN THE OPPO-NENT'S JAB.
AT THIS DISTANCE, THE BEST CHOICE WOULD BE A LONG MIDDLE KICK, RIGHT?

IF HE DOESN'T RELAX,
HE WON'T BE ABLE TO GET HIS LEG ABOVE HIS WAIST...

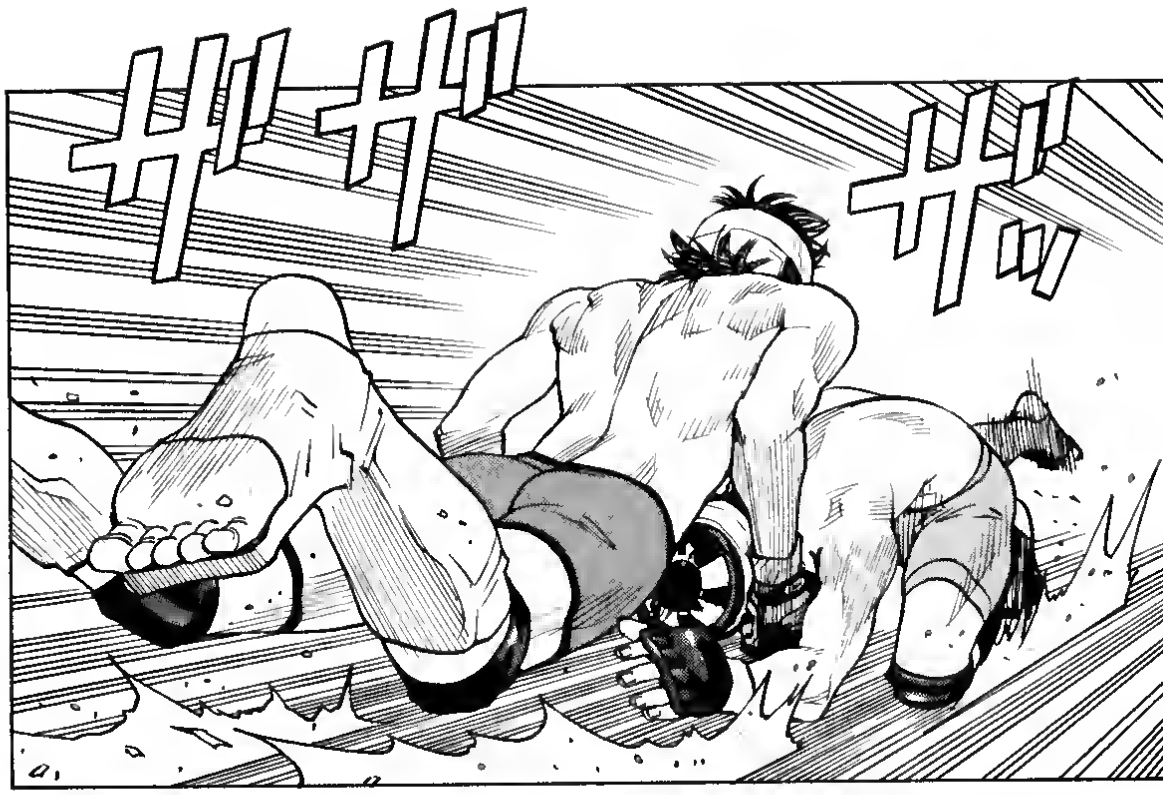

REALLY ?
BUT HE CAN'T LAND A KICK WITHOUT GAUGING THE DISTANCE WITH A JAB FIRST, RIGHT?
YOU'RE DIFFER-ENT.
BESIDES, MEGURU'S ALL TENSE AND NERVOUS.


pant
pant
WHAT ELSE WAS ALL THAT PRACTICE FOR?!
I'VE GOTTA GET CLOSER AND SHOOT FOR A TAKEDOWN!


!
SHOOTO


ヒュッ

I'M NOT DONE YET!
HE TOTALLY DODGED IT!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ザッ

NOW GET AWAY!
ALL RIGHT, SHIGERU!

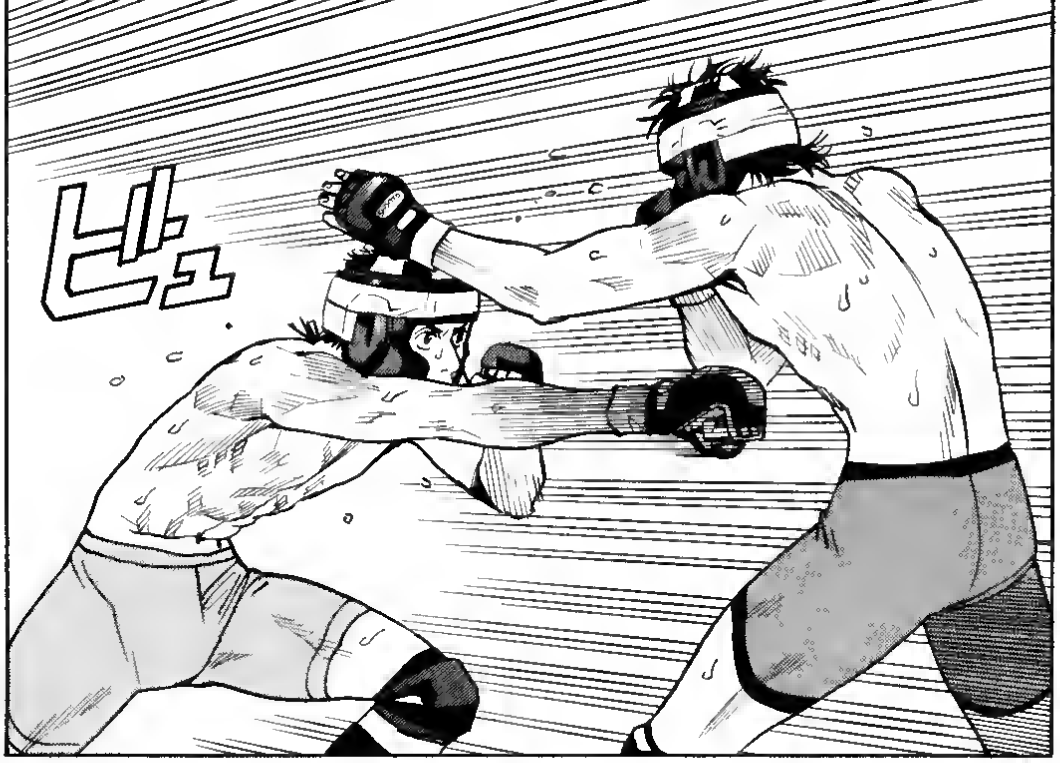
はぁ

ハッ

HE'S TOTALLY KEEPING HIM OUT OF RANGE...
MEGURU! TWO MINUTES LEFT!

BLUE! GET UP.
BUT I PRACTICED SO HARD...
pant
pant

pant
pant
DON'T GIVE UP!
WE'RE ONLY HALFWAY THROUGH..
pant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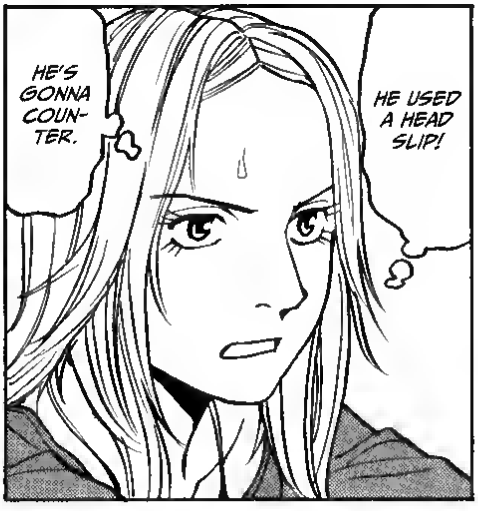
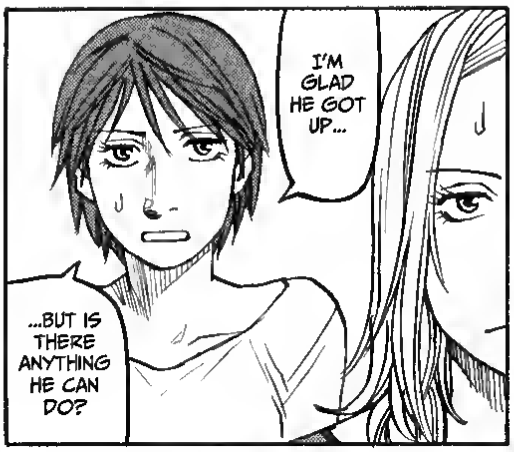
THEN A STRAIGHT RIGHT TO THE BODY...
JAB NEXT.

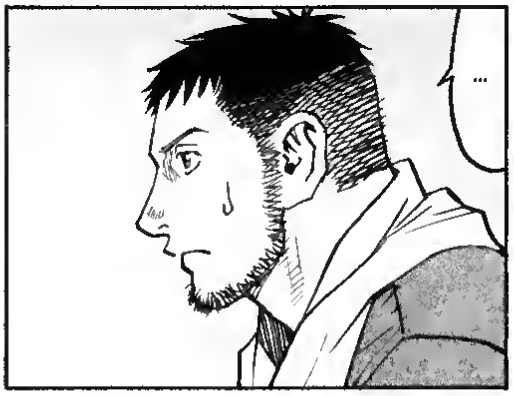

HE'S GONNA COUN-TER.
HE USED A HEAD SLIP!

!!

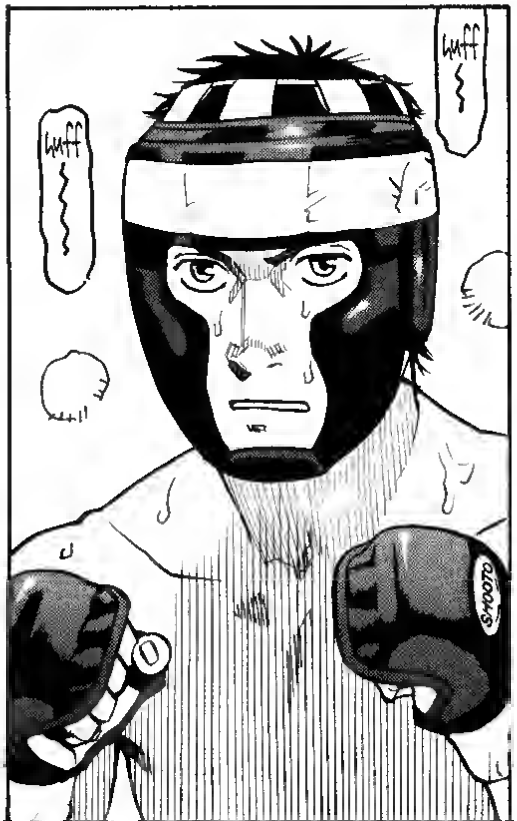
A COUN-TER?!
SHIT, WHAT THE HELL WAS THAT?!
THREE!

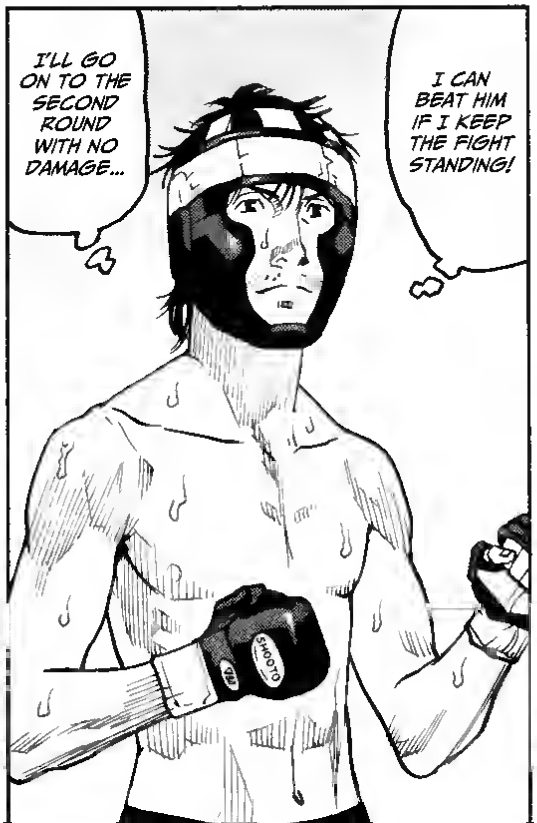
ONE!
TWO!
DOWN!


I'M GLAD HE GOT UP...
...BUT IS THERE ANYTHING HE CAN DO?


...

FOUR!


huff
huff
SHOOTO


I'LL GO ON TO THE SECOND ROUND WITH NO DAMAGE...
I CAN BEAT HIM IF I KEEP THE FIGHT STANDING!
SHOOTO